

# DATING THE RAPTURE

## MATTHEW 24

This week, the talk of the news has been the prediction by Harold Camping that the rapture would take place on May 21 at 600 PM. Since we are all here, I am assuming that, once again, Mr. Camping got it wrong.

I can see little that was accomplished in all of this other than to further demean the church and the Christian faith – and therefore Christ himself – by making baseless predictions concerning the end of time.

But this is, of course, not the first time this has been done, though the results have always been the same.

- 2nd Century CE: Prophets and Prophetesses of the Montanist movement predicted that Jesus would return sometime during their lifetime and establish the New Jerusalem in the city of Pepuza in Asia Minor.
- 234 AD Hippolytus – 5500 years Adam to Christ. End would come around year 500, the end of 6000 years before the beginning of the 1000 year reign of Christ – the Sabbath of years.
- 987 – 981 Last of Carolingian Dynasty. Way cleared for Antichrist. Began using Anno Domini (AD) – year of our Lord – in dates.
- 1809 Mary Bateman, who specialized in fortune telling, had a magic chicken that laid eggs with end time messages on them. One message said that Christ was coming. The uproar she created ended when she was caught forcing an egg into the hen's oviduct by an unannounced visitor. Mary later was hanged for poisoning a wealthy client.
- 1843-44 William Miller was the founder of an end-times movement that was so prominent it received its own name-- Millerism. From his studies of the Bible, Miller determined that the second coming would happen sometime between 1843-1844. A spectacular meteor shower in 1833 gave the movement a good push forward. The build up of anticipation continued until March 21, 1844,

when Miller's one year time table ran out. Some followers set another date of Oct 22, 1844. This too failed, collapsing the movement.

- 1850: Ellen White, founder of the Seven Day Adventists movement, made many predictions of the timing of the end of the world. All failed.
- 1891 or before: On 1835-FEB-14, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon church, attended a meeting of church leaders. He said that the meeting had been called because God had commanded it. He announced that Jesus would return within 56 years — i.e. before 1891-FEB-15.
- JW's hold world record for most failed predictions: 1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975, 1994
- 1982: Pat Robertson predicted a few years in advance that the world would end in the fall of 1982.
- 1986 Moses David of *The Children of God* faith group predicted that the Battle of Armageddon would take place in 1986. Russia would defeat Israel and the United States. A worldwide Communist dictatorship would be established. In 1993, Christ would return to earth.
- 1988: Hal Lindsey had predicted in his book "The Late, Great Planet Earth" that the Rapture was coming in 1988
- 1988 Edgar Whisenant, NASA scientist "88 Reasons Why the Rapture is in 1988"
- 1989 "89 Reasons Why the Rapture is in 1989"
- 1992 David Koresh, Branch Davidians Armageddon would begin at their commune, Mt. Carmel. 1993, destroyed by fire
- 1994, 2011 Harold Camping
- Website – Sometime around or just after 2005 Fred Alan, Bloomington, MN 15 proofs that this generation will see the second coming of Christ and that Abortion is the primary reason for the final unleashing of Evil.

There is no way any man can determine the date for Christ's return any more than the Jews could set a date for His first coming.

Matt. 24.36, 42, 44, 50; 25.13; Mark 13.32

The angels do not know it.

The Son did not know it while He was on the earth.

Only the Father knows.

The admonition we should take to heart is that we are always prepared, no matter when it occurs.

For generations, the Jews had looked for the Messiah. They knew he would be born just like every other Jew, therefore every Jewish girl held on to the thought – the hope – that she might give birth to the Messiah.

It is why there was so much dishonor attached to a woman who was barren and why there was so much rejoicing each time a male child was born.

There were prophecies made concerning the Messiah that should have made recognizing Him a matter of education to know the properties, and observation to recognize when they were fulfilled.

Yet the Jews missed it.

In spite of all their study and knowledge, when the Messiah did come, He looked nothing like what they had imagined, so they did not recognize Him.

Each prophecy related to the Messiah – and there are well over 300 of them that Jesus fulfilled perfectly – they completely missed.

Ever since the first century, men have tried to determine the date for Christ's return. They have studied Daniel and the Revelation, Thessalonians and Matthew trying to figure out the code of the Second Coming.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an English theologian named James Darby believed he had figured out the sequence of events the the process of the return of Christ and the millennium and the judgment.

He carried his message all over the world, and soon, evangelicals bought into his plan almost completely. Later in the century, C.I.

Scofield integrated Darby's ideas into his study Bible which rapidly became one of the best selling Bibles of all time.

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anyone who contradicted the scheme outlined by James Darby was – and still is today – labeled a heretic or a liberal and is risks being virtually excommunicated from the church.

By the 1970's eschatological studies (studies of end times) based on the Darby-Scofield concept dominated Christian book sales.

Hal Lindsay, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, was one of the greatest sellers of the decade, making the NY Times best-seller list.

Man had studied the signs, come to a conclusion about what the Second Coming would look like, and settled in to wait for god to prove their predictions correct.

Yet just like the Jews, evangelicals may one day find themselves completely baffled by how things actually turn out.

The primary emphasis in the Darby-Scofield plan is on the rapture of the church. Their teaching makes it sound as if the rapture of the church is the greatest event on God's calendar and the climax of all of history.

But there is no evidence that the rapture of the church is ever intended to be simply a rescue.

Instead, it is one more element in God's plan of redemption which He set in place before He created the world, not for the sake of man, but for His own glory.

Why do people look for and desire Jesus to return?

It's only my guess, but I would venture that the majority of people would answer that question from the perspective of men, not God.

Men are looking for the rapture because they want

- to be rescued,
- to be freed from the troubles of this world or
- from the sin that besets us,

- free from pain and sadness,
- the pleasures promised to those who are welcomed to heaven – mansion, streets of gold, angels singing, no more tears, etc.

But that is the way men always look at the things of God unless someone points out the error of their ways. We are a very self-centered species. Everything is about us.

Our tendency is to see the world and to think about redemption and about Heaven from the perspective of man instead of the perspective of God. Which leads me to ask another question:

Why does God want Jesus to return?

1. Christ's return completes the plan of redemption that God put into place before the foundation of the world for His own glory.

1 Thess. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Matt. 24:30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matt. 25:31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

1 Cor. 15:51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment,

in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

2. God's work in the creation will be completed.

Eze. 12:25 For I am the LORD; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord GOD." 26 And the word of the LORD came to me: 27 "Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.' 28 Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord GOD."

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

3. Satan and sin will ultimately be defeated.

2 Th. 2:7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming.

4. Christ will come to claim the bride God has prepared for Him.

2 Cor. 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ.

Matt. 25:1-13

Rev. 19:6-9

## 5. Christ shall reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords

1 Tim. 6:14 to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might for ever. Amen.

Rev. 19.11-16

What is the blessed hope of the Christian and the church?

Is it the rapture?

The phrase is only used once in the NT.

Titus 2.11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

The blessed hope is not a rapture that delivers Christians and the church from tribulation – a doctrine that cannot be found in any church teachings and did not exist as a doctrine until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

The blessed hope of the church is our union with “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

We long for His presence and the coming of His kingdom.

As far as setting a date for Christ’s return, it is really a very simple thing to do.

Matt. 24:14 This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations – to every tribe and people group – and then the end will come.